

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SP-02 ICA-11 AID-05 EB-08
NSC-05 TRSE-00 SS-15 STR-07 OMB-01 CEA-01 L-03
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R 221018Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4833
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC, HONOLULU

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, ERTD, LA, TH
SUBJECT: THAI-LAO TRADE AGREEMENT

1. THAI AND LAO NEGOTIATORS HAVE APPARENTLY REACHED AGREEMENT ON A COMPREHENSIVE TRADE PACT WHICH WOULD FOSTER TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO STATES. THAI DEPUTY COMMERCE MINISTER PROK AMMRANAN RETURNED FROM VIENTIANE MAY 18 AFTER INITIALLING AN AGREEMENT WITH LAOTIAN DEPUTY MINISTER FOR COMMERCE AND TRADE KAMMA POMKONG. THAIS HAVE APPARENTLY AGREED TO CONDUCT TRADE ON A GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT BASIS, WITH THE THAI COMMERCE MINISTRY SERVING AS THE FOCAL POINT FOR COORDINATION OF PRIVATE TRADE WITH LAOS. PRESS REPORTED THAT THE AGREEMENT INDICATES THAT THAILAND WILL PURCHASE TIMBER, COFFEE BEANS, AND ELECTRICITY FROM LAOS AND LAOS WILL BUY RICE, DAIRY PRODUCTS, TEXTILES AND CONSUMER GOODS FROM THAILAND. THAIS ARE REPORTEDLY EXPECTED TO PURCHASE 200,000 BAHT (US\$10,000) OF TIMBER PER YEAR. LAOTIANS APPARENTLY

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ARE SEEKING TO RAISE THE COST OF ELECTRICITY SUPPLIED TO THAILAND FROM THE NAM NGUM HYDROELECTRIC PROJECT.

2. VIENTIANE IS APPARENTLY ALSO INTERESTED IN CONCLUDING A RELATED AGREEMENT ON TRANSIT OF GOODS TO LAOS. ON THIS QUESTION, PRESS REPORTED THAT THE THAI DELEGATION PROPOSED PROVIDING MORE TRUCKS AND FERRIES AT NONG KHAI,

MORE STORAGE FACILITIES, AND LOWER TRANSPORTATION COSTS BOTH INTO AND OUT OF LAOS. THE THAI DELEGATION TOLD THE PRESS THAT THE LAOTIAN SIDE WAS CONSIDERING THE PROPOSALS.

3. MFA OFFICIAL CONFIRMED TO US MAY 18 THAT THE DELEGATIONS IN VIENTIANE HAD WORKED OUT A COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT, PATTERNED ALONG THE LINES OF THE AGREEMENT CONCLUDED BETWEEN THE SRV AND THAILAND. THE TEXT WILL BE REVIEWED NOW THAT PROK HAS RETURNED TO BANGKOK. IF THE AGREEMENT PROVES SATISFACTORY TO BOTH GOVERNMENTS, MFA OFFICIAL SAID THAT FONMIN UPPADIT WOULD PROBABLY VISIT VIENTIANE TO SIGN THE PACT.

4. COMMENT: A TRADE PACT WILL BE ANOTHER BLOCK IN RESTRUCTURING A PRAGMATIC AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIALIST LAOS AND THAILAND, A PROCESS WHICH WAS RESUMED UNDER THE KRIANGSAK ADMINISTRATION. HOWEVER, FROM THE FRAGMENTARY INDICATIONS OF VOLUME WE HAVE SEEN SO FAR, TRADE WILL BE CONDUCTED AT A RELATIVELY LOW LEVEL. ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT WILL BE GREATER IN THE POLITICAL THAN IN THE COMMERCIAL FIELD.

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